

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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TAGS: LT, SF, PFOR

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA/LESOTHO FON MINISTERS MEETING

SUMMARY: SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN MINISTER PIK BOTHA VISITED LESOTHO JUNE FIRST FOR ONE DAY'S DISCUSSIONS WITH LESOTHO FOREIGN MINISTER C.D. MOLAPO. ACCORDING TO MOLAPO THE SUBJECT GENERALLY WAS THE SHARPLY DETERIORATED RELATIONS BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND LESOTHO. THERE WAS NO AGREEMENT AS TO THE CAUSE OF THE DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS AND, AFTER A FRANK AND DETAILED EXCHANGE OF VIEWS, BOTHA DEPARTED SAYING HE WOULD LOOK INTO ONE ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM - ALLEGED HARASSMENT OF BASOTHO AT THE BORDERS.

1. SOUTH AFRICAN FONMIN PIK BOTHA MET WITH LESOTHO FONMIN C.D. MOLAPO JUNE 1 IN MASERU. LITTLE INFORMATION HAS BEEN MADE PUBLIC ON THE VISIT. THE FOREIGN MINISTER BRIEFED THE CHARGE' ON THE VISIT JUST BEFORE DEPARTING FOR LONDON WITH THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE.

2. ACCORDING TO MOLAPO, THE VISIT WAS ENTIRELY AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVT. (SAG). THE THEME WAS THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SHARPLY DETERIORATED RELATIONS BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND LESOTHO. BOTHA ALLEGEDLY CLAIMED THAT THE DETERIORATION WAS DUE TO LESOTHO GOVT (GOL) DENUNCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA OVER THE PAST MONTHS. MOLAPO SAID HE REFLECTED THIS INTERPRETATION ENTIRELY AND CHALLENGED BOTHA TO PROVE THAT ANY STATEMENT MADE BY GOL WAS BASED ON FALSE PREMISES. BOTHA ALLEGEDLY CITED LESOTHO'S TERRITORIAL

CLAIMS ON THE ORANGE FREE STATE AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE PROVOCATIVE STATEMENTS HE HAD IN MIND.

MOLAPO SAID HE TOLD BOTHA THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND LESOTHO "COULD NEVER BE GOOD" UNTIL AND UNLESS LESOTHO'S TERRITORIAL CLAIMS WERE SUBMITTED TO A BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ADJUDICATION. HE SAID HE HAD TOLD BOTHA THAT LESOTHO WAS NOT INSISTENT ON WINNING BUT THAT THE GOL FEELS IT HAS A CASE AND IT WANTS TO PRESENT ITS CASE TO A COMMISSION.

3. MOLAPO SAID HE TOLD BOTHA THAT THE SECOND CAUSE OF DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA WAS THE MISTREATMENT OF BASOTHO AT THE BORDER. HE CITED HARASSMENT, ARBITRARY AND CAPRICIOUS ARREST, AND EVEN SHOOTING AT BASOTHO AT OR ACROSS THE BORDER. BOTHA SAID HE WAS NOT AWARE OF ANY HARASSMENT BUT THAT HE WOULD LOOK INTO THE CHARGE.

4. BOTHA REPORTEDLY SAID HIS GOVT IS DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED THAT LESOTHO HAS NEVER ASKED FOR ANY ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM THE SAG DESPITE A LONG-STANDING OFFER TO PROVIDE SUCH HELP. MOLAPO SAID HE TOLD BOTHA THAT LESOTHO DID NOT ASK FOR SOUTH AFRICAN ASSISTANCE BECAUSE THE GOL FEARS THAT AS SOON AS SOUTH AFRICAN TECHNICIANS WERE PRESENT IN THE COUNTRY THEY WOULD BEGIN SAYING THAT LESOTHO IS TOO POOR AND BACKWARD TO DO ANYTHING FOR ITSELF. MOLAPO SAID THAT LESOTHO WOULD NOT REQUEST SA DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE BECAUSE IT BELIEVES SUCH ASSISTANCE WOULD HAVE HIDDEN SUBVERSIVE MOTIVES.

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5. BECAUSE THE BRIEFING BY FONMIN MOLAPO TOOK PLACE AT THE AIRPORT WHILE HE WAS WAITING TO DEPART FOR LONDON, THERE WAS NO TIME TO EXPLORE THE BOTHA/MOLAPO TALKS FURTHER. IN ANSWER TO THE CHARGE'S QUESTION, MOLAPO SAID THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF THE MONDALE/VORSTER TALKS. STRANGELY MISSING FROM THE AGENDA WAS ANY DISCUSSION OF THE TRANSKEI.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THERE ARE AREAS OF MAJOR DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN SAG AND GOL (TRANSKEI, LESOTHO'S TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, SAG TREATMENT OF BOSOTHO, AND APARTHEID), THERE ARE SUBTLE FORCES AT PLAY WHICH TEND TO MILITATE AGAINST A FURTHER DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS. WITHIN SAG THERE MAY BE REALIZATION THAT INCREASING HOSTILITY WITH A BLACK-RULED NEIGHBOR WILL WORK TO ITS DETREMENT AND THAT MORE CONCILIATORY APPROACH IS DESIRABLE.

7. ON THE OTHER HAND GOL MUST ALSO COPE WITH CERTAIN MODERATING FORCES. LESOTHO IS OVERWHELMINGLY DEPENDENT ON SOUTH AFRICA FOR REVENUE, FOOD AND JOBS. THERE HAVE BEEN CALLS

RECENTLY FROM CONSERVATIVE FACTION WITHIN THE RULING BNP TO CONCILIATE SAG. CONSERVATIVES ARE FEARFUL OF CONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHAOS IF SOUTH AFRICA SHOULD REALLY RETALIATE, E.G. REPATRIATE BESOTHO WORKERS OR WITHDRAW RAIL TRANSPORT SUBSIDY. JONATHAN, UNDER PRESSURE FROM HIS LEFT TO BECOME EVEN MORE MILITANT AND HIS RIGHT TO BACK OFF FROM CONFRONTATION WITH SAG, SEEMS TO HAVE OPTED FOR THE PROGMATIC APPROACH. HE WILL CONTINUE TO CRITICIZE SOUTH AFRICA FOR ITS APARTHEID POLICIES, WORK TO PROTECT BAOSTHO CITIZENS FROM SAG HARASSMENT, AND SEEK INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR LESOTHO'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HOWEVER, HE WILL ALSO KEEP CONTACTU OPEN WITH SAG IN RESPONSE TO VOICES CONSELING MODERATION HERE AT HOME.

8. GOL AND SAG, AFTER MONTHS OF VITUPEROUS RHETORIC, SEEM TO HAVE REASSESSED THEIR POSITIONS UNDER THE PRESSURE OF DIFFERING POLITICAL FORCES, AND MOVED TO AVOID A FURTHER MORE SERIOUS DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS.  
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